

into the condo and noticed that Mary Beth's purse and tote bag were not there, but that made sense because she was out with the car.

I guess she'll be coming back soon, because we have plans for tonight, he thought.

He also noticed that the condo had been freshly vacuumed, which was a little odd because that was a task usually done over the weekend.

But she didn't come back, didn't call, and Sam soon grew wary. *Where is she? What's going on?*

He called friends, including Mary Beth's son, Art, around 9 p.m., but no one knew where Mary Beth was, and he wasn't getting anywhere. He called several hospitals in town, thinking maybe there had been an accident, and asked each if she was there. She wasn't. He called a friend who was battling cancer, but Mary Beth hadn't been over to visit her.

This wasn't like Mary Beth, and he grew anxious, a mixture of anger and dread. *Why doesn't she come home?* Meanwhile, he washed some clothes to pass time between 9 and 10 p.m. in the building's downstairs laundry room and chatted with neighbors.

When Sam returned to the condo, Mary Beth still wasn't there. He lay down in bed and dozed off. When he woke up, it was 1:30 a.m. He looked over at the bedroom closet, and for the first time since coming home from work, noticed that the door was closed. Mary Beth almost always kept it open, except when

she vacuumed.

Sam got up and looked in the closet. There was Mary Beth, scrunched up in a fetal position, facedown on the floor of the closet, dead.

She was wearing a blouse and slip; her hair was combed as if she had just come out of the shower, which was consistent with her routine after a swim. There was no blood. Sam touched her once on the cheek and she was cold. He left the room and called 911. The police came out and took him in for several hours of questioning. He told them what happened, that he found her in the closet, and they said they didn't believe him. They asked him what really happened and he told them the same story again. They told him Mary Beth had been killed in the evening, after 6 p.m., after Sam arrived home. Nothing made sense to Sam—that his fiancée was dead and the police said he killed her. He told them again he didn't. They said he did. Then they told him to go to a hotel for the time being and they would contact him.

The police told reporters that Mary Beth Townsend's death was suspicious, but it took six months before it would officially be ruled a homicide. According to the local paper, they "insinuated" to reporters that Mary Beth was killed by someone she knew, so the public had no reason to fear that a serial killer was on the loose. The condominium unit was sealed for the next three weeks.

Meanwhile, Sam Bilodeau waited in limbo. On that Saturday, after he had been interrogated by the police and checked into a hotel, he called Art but

not talk about the horrible incident anymore, he just wanted to lie down. He simply reached a point where he was too tired to care anymore.

I was not convinced that Sam had the personality to kill. He had no violent background and no motive—there was no life insurance from which he or even Mary Beth's son could have gained, for example. There was not any great equity in the condo that she owned alone, and her death left Art responsible for an \$86,000 mortgage. Mary Beth's son said that Sam and his mother got along fabulously. There was nothing there, no reason for him to kill his fiancée.

I could not envision such a docile man becoming so angry that he smacked his fiancée. I found it even harder to believe he would have strangled her. Then, for him to be so unbelievably clever and calm that he could place her body in the closet, remove items to stage a burglary, drive the car to a black area of town to throw the blame on someone else, destroy the clutch so it would look like the car had been driven by someone unable to use a stick...no, no, not this man.

Sam Biloiseau did not have a motive or the personality or the opportunity to commit this crime.

was out of the way. It wasn't a location a criminal would pick purely by accident. It wasn't an isolated house that would catch one's eye, it wasn't an easily accessible end unit, it wasn't even a condo on the first floor. The killer wouldn't be someone who just happened upon Mary Beth's condo and thought, *Oh, I think I'll just slide over to that door and try the handle.* What we know happened at the crime scene was that there was a burglary; someone came into her apartment and took things that belonged to Mary Beth. He took her jewelry, he took rolled quarters that were set aside for future laundry use, and he took her vehicle.

The police said she was not raped, but neither Art nor I saw the autopsy report, so there was no way to know if that was true or not. When Sam found her in the closet, Mary Beth was not entirely dressed. It appeared she might have come back from the swimming pool or just come out of the shower, and was interrupted while she was getting dressed. Sometimes rape or sexual assault cannot be identified by an autopsy. If there is no physical damage, if the man used a condom and therefore didn't leave any semen, we just don't know if there was a sexual assault or not. He might even have had some weird sexual idea that had nothing to do with actual penetration. As the profiler, it was hard to tell whether this was a sexual assault and a burglary or just a burglary gone wrong.

That's a sign of a true psychopath, making lemonade out of lemons: "I did kidnap, rape, and strangle that girl, tried to kill her, but I did her a favor. So I think we should call it even."

Scotty May's closing argument won him a sentence of life plus thirty. He received twenty years for abduction with intent to defile, to be served concurrently; the remaining life plus ten years are to be served consecutively. May can still apply for geriatric parole when he reaches the age of sixty, which will be in the year 2028.

The court declined to hear oral arguments on the motion to set aside the jury verdict on rape. But Judge Stanley P. Klein did tell May: "Your whole defense is that you weren't there. But it was clear to this Court, based on the questions you asked the witness [Shania] on cross-examination, that you WERE there. In this Court's opinion, the jury did not make a mistake."

ART SPOKE to a detective and told him he attended Scotty May's trial.

The detective said, "We were supposed to have somebody there, but I don't know if we did." It was the first official acknowledgment that the police were even considering Scotty May a person of interest. "We are certainly focused on him," the detective said, halfheartedly.

"Hello, Art. This is Detective B. from the police department. I had told you that I would get back with you sometime in October, and I wanted to chat with you briefly about the case. I have no new exciting news for you, except that the prosecutor and I are working toward an indictment. Unfortunately, I can't give you a time frame as yet. But I would like to talk to you. Please call me later today, or I will try you again. Thank you."

The phone call gave Art false hope that they were doing something, but nothing ever came of the indictment.

IT WAS ABOUT a year after the Mary Beth Townsend murder that Scotty May attacked the thirteen-year-old girl.

When I found out the name of the Trashman employee was Scotty May, I paid a visit to his girlfriend, Crystal Jones, to discover a little bit more of what she knew around the time of the crime. The day Mary Beth died was, not coincidentally, Crystal Jones's birthday. I believe May needed money to buy his girlfriend a present.

The day after the murder, May went to Philadelphia. Mary Beth's murderer stole her rings, and he would have had to hawk them someplace; they were worth some money. If you hawk things in Washington, D.C., you have to